**A Prayer Service in a Time of Deep Sadness**

**St. Anne’s Episcopal School**

**Monday, December 17, 2012**

**Opening**

As we come together this morning, we begin with the knowledge that this is Advent.

We light the candles, not in celebration but because we need to be reminded that

the light of God can cast away all darkness.

***A Reading from the Gospel of John***

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

**Let us pray.**

God of compassion, We stand before you stunned by the events of the past days.

Hear our prayer of lamentation as we plead, “Why?”

We, your people are in pain.

You are all loving and all giving.

Calm the storms that threaten us; send your Spirit to comfort us

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

**A Reading from the book of Lamentations**

*My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is;*

*so I say, “Gone is my peace, and all that I had hoped for from the Lord,*

*The thought of my affliction and hopelessness gnaws at me,*

*My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me.*

*But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:*

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end;*

*they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

*“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”*

*The Lord is good to those who trust in him, to the soul that seeks him.*

*It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.*

Let us pray,

Gracious and loving God: What has happened?  We do not understand, O God.

What we feel today is different than fear, deeper than pain.  Our souls have been struck with terror, for the little children who died had hopes, dreams, and joys of their own.  In them we see our own children and grandchildren, and we mourn alongside their parents and grandparents.  We mourn for their teachers, also, who selflessly spend their lives providing care, love, and nurture.

O sovereign God, we remember your promise, that you “heal the broken-hearted, and bind up their wounds." Be with those whose grief is inconsolable.  Walk the path of mourning they now face alongside them, for only you, O God, have shoulders strong enough to bear this burden.

This is Advent, a time of waiting in darkness that we may see the light.  And the darkness is dense now, O God.  Forgive us if we cannot yet see the light.  Embrace the little ones we could not protect.  Give them a peaceful home in your everlasting care.

We pray to you, O God, for we trust in the truth that we are yours.  All of us.  The innocent and the guilty.  The student and the teacher.  In life and in death, we belong to you.

As we grieve, may we find the strength to love.  May we be ever mindful of our responsibilities to you, O God, and to all of your children.  May we be grateful for the gift of life.  We pray in the name of the child who came to save us from ourselves, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.  Amen.

**The 23rd Psalm**

*The Lord is my shepherd:
I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

**Let us pray for the victims of this terrible tragedy,**

For principal Dawn Hochsprung,

For teachers Rachel Davine

Anne Marie Murphy,

Lauren Gabrielle Rousseau,

Victoria Soto,

and for school psychologist Mary Sherlach,

 **"Heavenly father, we entrust them to your eternal care"**

For the students

Charlotte Bacon,

Daniel Barden

Olivia Engel

Josephine Gay

Dylan Hockley

Madeleine Hsu

Catherine Hubbard

Chase Kowalski,

Jesse Lewis

Ana Marquez-Greene

James Mattioli

Grace McDonnell

Emilie Parker

Jack Pinto

Noah Pozner

Caroline Previdi

Jessica Rekos

Avielle Richman

Benjamin Wheeler

Allison Wyatt

 **"Heavenly father, we entrust them to your eternal care"**

For Nancy Lanza, the gunman's mother

and Adam Lanza the gunman himself

 **"Heavenly father, we entrust them to your eternal care"**

Let us also pray for the families of those killed or injured, and all those in the Newtown community impacted by this event.

**"Heavenly father, we entrust them to your eternal care"**

Let us pray for the doctors, fire fighters, police, clergy, counselors, social workers and other care givers who gave and are giving of themselves to begin the healing.

**"Heavenly father, we entrust them to your eternal care"**

Finally, let us pray for ourselves: for this school and our faculty, children and families as we move forward from this terrible week. May we have the courage to share our sadness and fear with our friends when we need to and the strength to support one another through our pain.

**"Heavenly father, we entrust them and ourselves to your eternal care"**

O God, whose beloved Son took children into his arms and blessed them: Give us grace to entrust those who have died to your never- failing care and love. Deal graciously with those who are grieving. Surround them with your love, that they may not be overwhelmed by their loss, but have confidence in your goodness, and strength to meet the days to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**A Reading from the Revelation to John**

*I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, standing before the throne and before the Lamb,*

*Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, ‘These are they who have come out of the great ordeal;
They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;
   the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat;
for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd,
   and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’*

**Psalm 27:**

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

For he will guard me in his shelter at the time of trouble;
he will protect me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.

I trust that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in this life and in the world to come.

AMEN

***A Reading from the Gospel of John***

*Jesus said,**‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also."*

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**Let us pray.**

Gracious God,

Send your Holy Spirit among us

to dispel the fear that accompanies grief and loss.

Help us to continue in the days ahead

with our eyes fixed on the salvation you have promised us

through the death and resurrection of your Son,

who is Lord forever and ever.

Amen.

**Let us offer Christ’s peace to the world by sharing that peace with one another.**

 **The peace of the Lord be always with you**

**Go in Peace to love and serve the Lord**

**Thanks be to God**

**Resources drawn upon for this service accessed December 16, 2012**

**Prayer service from The Diocese of Davenport web site**

[**http://www.davenportdiocese.org/lit/liturgylibrary/Resources/litPrayerwhenDisasterHits.pdf**](http://www.davenportdiocese.org/lit/liturgylibrary/Resources/litPrayerwhenDisasterHits.pdf)

**The Online Book of Common Prayer**

[**http://www.bcponline.org/**](http://www.bcponline.org/)

**A Pastoral Letter to APCE in the wake of violence to children and teachers from Forrest Palmer - APCE President** containing a prayer written by theRev. Stephen Baldwin, Teaching Elder of the Ronceverte (WV) Presbyterian Church

<http://hosted-p0.vresp.com/792627/3e5f4e5d23/ARCHIVE>